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Oral History Transcription with Rella Gagnon Gessner

Rella Gagnon Gessner

Don Cyr

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Oral History Interview of
Rella Gagnon Gessner
by
Don Cyr

spellings:
other -

~~Rella~~? RIVA?
ORILLA?

This is March 26, 1981. I am interviewing Rella Gessner.

Q. What is your full name and where were you born?

A. My full name was Rella Gagnon.

Q. On your birth certificate how is your first name? Is it Rella or Aurella?

A. Aurella. Because ^{when} I went to get my passport last fall (I went to Jerusalem and all that) I had to go by that name over there, too. I don't know why.

Q. It is a beautiful name.

A. I probably should be going on that now, but everybody calls me Rella.

Q. If people call you Rella, then that's your name. You were born in Guerette? When were you born?

A. The seventeenth ^{20th} of December, 1907.

Q. Wow. Where did you live as a child? Did you live in Guerette?

A. Yes. Until I got married.

Q. And that's when you came here to Stockholm?

A. Yes. About 40 years ago.

Q. Is the house where you were living as a child still standing?

A. Yes. Mrs. Gessner. We used to live in old Mrs. Gessner's house.

Q. You mean when you got married, that's where you lived.

A. Yes. When I got married.

Q. Is the house where you were born in Guerette still standing?

A. Yes. They ^{remodeled} it, but there is still some there.

Q. It still is the original house. How large was your family?

A. Oh, we were twelve ~~and ten~~.

Q. You had eleven brothers and sisters, then?

A. We were two families because my father died and my mother remarried again. We were four children the first time ~~and then we were five. but one died.~~

Q. Could you give the names of your brothers and sisters when you were 4 in that family?

A. Yes. One was ^{Alfred} ~~Efrim~~, the oldest one who died and Albert, ^{Wm} ~~??????~~, and myself.
^{Lucille}

Q. And what was your mother's name?

A. ~~Ozity~~ Marquis.

Q. What was your father's name?

A. My first father was Herbert Gagnon. Have you ever heard of Jim Gagnon?

Q. No, I haven't.

A. That was his father.

Q. Did your grandparent's live with you?

A. No. We were such a big family we didn't have any room for grandparents.

Q. I see. Your mother got married a second time. What was your step-father's name?

A. ~~George~~ ^{Peter} St. Pierre.
^{GUAS}

Q. How many children did he have?

A. Let me see. They had four boys and three girls.

Q. Do you remember their names?

A. ~~????????????~~ They all don't remain. The oldest one was Romeo St. Peter, then there was Lawrence, Gilman, Norman, Lillian (that's a girl), Gelme???, and Robertine.

Q. Wow.

A. That's quite a family.

Q. Really. That is a large family. What was your father's occupation?

A. He was a farmer and my mother had a post office and a store.

Q. In Guerette?

A. In Guerette. Well, my father and my mother.

Q. That must have been one of the only businesses in Guerette.

A. Yes. That was the only business they had. My father was a farmer and my mother had a post office and a store.

Q. I see. Where were your parents born?

A. My mother was born in St. Agathe and I think my father was born in Guerette. I know my first father, ~~222222~~ that was a long time ago. Of course I am 72 years old and I was born three months after my father died. So, that is a long time ago.

Q. I see. Did your mother always run the store and the post office?

A. Yes, she did until she retired. She sold the store to my brother.

Q. Do you remember your grandparent's names? Your mother's parents and your father's parents. Your natural father's parents.

A. Grampy was Abraham and grannie was Filamin???

Q. Do you know what your Filamin's maiden name was, by chance?

A. No. That is something I don't know.

Q. Now, on your other side, would that be on your mother's side?

A. No. Gagnon. That would be on the Gagnon side. On Marquis side he was Leo, Leo Marquis and grammie was Lucy. We just called her grammie all the time.

Q. Do you know if your grandparents were born in Maine or were they born in Canada?

A. They must have all been born in Maine, I'm pretty sure.

Q. Do you know where they came from originally?

A. Frenchville.

Q. They must have been some of the original settlers there, then.

A. Yes, I think they all came from Frenchville, I'm pretty sure. Because my mother used to live in Frenchville when she was young.

Q. When did your parents move to Guerette ~~1911~~ When they were first married?

A. Well, my mother lived in Guerrette ~~was~~ before my father died. He always lived in Guerrette. My father was from Guerrette ~~too~~. My first father and they had a store in Guerrette ~~too~~, too. They all lived in Guerrette, for all I know, after they were married.

Q. Where do your brothers and sisters live now?

V V V A. I have a sister, Lucy ~~Sanston~~ ^{Sampson} ~~222~~, who lives in Florida. I have ^{two} brothers in Guerrette ~~222~~, Lawrence and Norman. I have another brother who died just a few years ago, William ~~222~~ ^{Romeo}. Then I have a sister, Lillian Daigle. She was a Daigle. Her husband died and she remarried, ~~twice~~. And the other one, married ~~Sylvia~~ ^{And Phobartine} ~~222~~ Gilmy ~~222~~. ¹ She is dead. ^{don't know the name. GELME} ^{Sylvia ~~Gilme~~ Willette}

Q. Do any of your brothers and sisters have children?

A. Yes.

Q. They all have pretty large families?

A. No, not too large. Lawrence had five kids.

Q. Do you know the names of the kids?

V V A. Yes. There is Philip, Larry, Rosaline, ~~Volia~~ ^{Lola}, and Mark. The other one, he had such big ~~222~~ ^{family} I didn't remember all name. Norman's family is Greg, Andrew, Howard, little ~~Just~~ ^{GAY} (there is one ~~Just~~ ^{GAUS} just like my father), Carol, Norma, and there is ~~another one~~. I ~~can't~~ remember the name.

Q. And can you think of any brothers and sisters who had children whose names you know?

V V V A. Gilman had three daughters. He had Claudette, Pammy, Marsha, and another one. I can't remember her name. Her name was very short. And the other one, ~~Gilmy~~ ^{two boys}, she had Clarence and ~~one is gone~~. He died quite a while ago. I can't remember his name. Nita and Brenda ~~222~~.

Q. Could you tell me who your brothers and sisters married?

A. Lawrence married Jean Plourde.

Q. And where are they living now?

V V A. She just passed away a couple of weeks ago. He lives in Guerrette ~~222~~. And Norman married Freda Collins. They live in ^{Ruby} Guerrette ~~222~~, too. Romeo, he's gone, too. His wife was Minny from Fort Kent. Gilman, his wife was a Guerrette, Rita Guerrette. Lillian was married a second time when her husband died. She married Elroy ~~222~~ the first time and then she married Ed Price the second time. And Gilmy ~~222~~ married Sylvia ~~222~~ Willette from St. Agathe

ugle

Q. Where did you go to school?

A. In Guerrette.

Q. Right there in Guerrette. Was it a one room school house?

A. Yes.

Q. Was it the only school in Guerrette?

1 A. Yes. It was the only school. I went there to the eighth ~~th~~ grade. My mother remarried again, so she had ^{such big} families. We had to go to Fort Kent and we had to board there. I guess they couldn't afford it or something. That's what I miss the most. I wish I had more school than that.

Q. So, you stayed at home. What did you do? Help with the housework?

A. Yes. I helped my mother almost until I got married. She had ^Y a family and my other sister worked out. I stayed home and helped my mother.

Q. What did you study?

A. Well, we studied everything because there was only one teacher. We studied everything. English, French, geography, arithmetic. All the things you take in school.

Q. Were you taught by nuns?

A. No. By a regular school teacher.

Q. Do you remember her name?

W A. There was Miss Feebe ^{Marguis} ~~Martin~~. There was Leon ^{Babin} ~~Babin~~ and Mr. ^{Dugae} ~~Babin~~. That was a long, long time ago. He's the first one who taught.

Q. Are any of your classmates in school around Stockholm now or are you the only one?

A. I am the only one.

Q. Where did you attend church when you were in Guerrette?

A. We had to go to Daigle.

Q. They didn't have a church in Guerrette?

A. No. We had to go to Daigle.

Q. Was it a long ride to Daigle?

A. It was eight miles.

Q. How would you get there?

A. We'd get there by car and then ~~before~~ before that we'd get there by horse.

Q. Really? That must have been fun.

A. It was fun.

Q. Did you go to catéchism?

A. Yes. In Guerrette and then we had to go have our confirmation in Daigle. We had to board there for a week.

Q. Oh, really. You would board there for a week and attend catéchism for that week and then get your confirmation.

A. Or our communion.

Q. You must have loved that. Being away from home for a while.

A. Yes. Being away from home you didn't have to work.

Q. What kind of chores did you have to do around the house?

A. I did mostly cooking. ~~cooking to me~~ ^{I did the best} cooking to me. I used to cook while my mother was in the store. I did cooking, ~~laundry~~ ^{and the washing.} I did all the work.

Q. Did you enjoy the cooking?

A. Yes. I enjoyed cooking and making house.

Q. That's good. What priests do you remember?

A. We had Father Cyr.

Q. Is ~~this~~ ^{this} in Guerrette?

A. Yes. We had Father Cyr, but it wasn't the one you had here. He was another one. We had Father Robitoy. We had Father ~~Shantoyet~~ ^{shatanyo}. We had so many different priests I can't remember all their names. Father Robitoy was the one I remember most because he was there for a long, long time. ~~And I liked him.~~

Q. Were the priests ~~very~~ ^{very} very active socially over there? Did they have a lot of organizations?

A. Yes. Well, we used to go practice singing and all that. ~~Singing~~

~~mass~~

Q. Did they have many other organizations?

A. That is all they had at the time.

Q. What ^{did} he do besides saying mass and administrating? Did he go around visiting a lot?

A. Well, once a year. That is all. He ~~used to~~ ^{could} come to our home more often because we were good friends with him.

Q. Did he organize very many things in the parish? Many social things?

A. Well, they built our church. I was gone ^{then}. So, they built that church, there. That's a nice little chapel.

Q. You came here when you got married. When did you get married?

A. I got married forty years ago.

Q. That would be 1941. That was right during the war.

A. Yes. We got married and the same year the war started.

Q. So, it would be December ~~7~~ seventh, 1941. It would have been that year, then. So, you came here to Stockholm.

A. Yes.

Q. They would have already had the church here.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember what priests they had here when you first came to Stockholm?

A. There was Father Cyr.

Q. Do you remember any other priests?

A. Yes. I wasn't in town at the time but they had Father ^{CRAMILLION} ~~Clemie~~ ²²², then they had Father Cyr, Father Gosselin, Father ^{AUGER} ~~Qay~~, and different priests since I've been here.

Q. Was there one priest you remember who was more active than the others? Organized more things.

A. I think it was Father ^{AUGER} ~~Qay~~. He did all the work.

Q. What ~~kind~~ of things did he do?

A. Well, he did things in church. He repaired the church. The church was so big they made another room. Well, I don't know what they did, but they did a lot of work and Father ~~Mass~~ was here at the time.

Q. Were you ever in the Dames de St. Anne?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. What did you do in that organization?

A. Well, we ^{really} didn't do ~~really~~ very much. If somebody died we would all go. ✓ We would have a ~~Mass~~ for them. We had meetings.

we would say the rosary.

Q. What did you do at your meetings?

A. Just talk and plan things. If we had a party we had to plan for it.

Q. Did you used to have parties very often?

A. Oh, yes. We had parties often.

Q. What kind of parties were they?

A. We'd play cards and sell cake and all kinds of things.

Q. What kinds of card games did you play?

A. We'd play charlamigne. *Charlemagne*

Q. Of course. Did you have dances very often and things like that?

→ A. No. They didn't have that at all. *these days people didn't dance.* ??????????????????????????????

Q. Right. That's true. What is really funny was before they built the church they used to have ~~Mass~~ in the dance hall.

A. Yes, I know it. I went to church there once in a while when I used to come and visit Stockholm.

Q. When you married, did you have a honeymoon?

A. Yes.

Q. ^hWhere did you go?

A. We went ~~to~~ out onto the Gaspé in Canada.

Q. That must have been beautiful.

A. Yes. It was in the fall. It was pretty.

Q. Did you go by car?

A. Yes, we did. My husband just had a new car.

Q. Of course you lived here in Stockholm. Were in Stockholm did you live?

A. We lived cross town were Mrs. Gessner used to live. We lived there with her for one year.

Q. Then after you lived with her?

A. And then in the second year we went to work in ~~Conneticut~~ in the winter. My husband was working for the railroad then he was ~~in~~ laid off early in the fall. ~~??~~ back and ~~and~~ bought this place. *then they came back in the spring so we went to Connecticut and when we came*

Q. What did he do in Conneticut?

A. He worked in a factory.

Q. What kind of a fatory?

A. I don't know what they were building. They were making tools or something. I don't know exactly what it was.

Q. Then he came back and bought this place.

A. From Edwin Bossie.

Q. Oh, from Edwin Bossie. Did he always sell gas, groceries, and things?

A. Yes. *Edwin had the store and he* ~~????????????????????????????????????~~ He just walked out and we walked in and we had the store and everything is the way it is now. We had gas and everything.

Q. And you lived right here in the back.

A. Yes. Right here. We didn't have this room, so we built this room. We didn't have enough room, so we built this room. My husband worked on the railroad all the time and I kept the store. He'd come home at night ~~and~~ *and take over*. Between the two of us we were making pretty good money, because we were making with the store at the time.

Q. Can you give the names and the birthdates of your children?

A. Sandra is the oldest. She was born the ~~the~~ 17th of June. She is 38 years old, now.

Q. If she is 38 that would be in 1943. She was born 2 years after you were married?

A. Yes. Beverly's birthday is the 17th of September. She is six years younger.

Q. Okay, so that would be 1949.

A. That's all. I didn't get married too young, so I didn't have a big family.

Q. So, you had two girls. Your girls are married now?

A. Both of them are. They both live in Connecticut.

Q. What are their husbands' names?

A. One is Paul Plourde and the other is John Plourde. Two brothers.

Q. Oh, really? Two sisters married two brothers. That's unusual. That's really interesting. How did they meet? Were they both from here?

A. They went to school together. They went to high school in St. Agatha at the convent. That's where they did their high school. Then the youngest one, she went to Portland to school, I believe. She is a registered nurse. There was another nun ~~there~~. They wanted her to go ~~away~~. They liked her.

Q. Did one fall in love first?

A. Sandra was the oldest one.

Q. And the other one, how did she meet the brother? Just from her sister dating?

A. I don't know how it happened. The youngest one, she had a lot of friends. She was very popular. But, she landed with Johnny. ~~He took her to the prom.~~ Quite friendly because Paul was married to her older sister.

Q. And how many years apart were their marriages? Do you remember?

A. The younger one ~~was~~ still going to school when Sandra got married. When she got through high school she went to school in Portland for two years and then she got married. She graduated in July and got married in August. The other one, she had two kids at the time. She must have been married about four years.

Q. I see. They were both independent in marrying the two brothers. They didn't marry them at the same time.

A. Oh, no. One was older than the other.

Q. When they went to school in St. Agatha, what special things did

they learn there? They must have loved going to school there.

A. Yes, they did. They really liked it there.

Q. Was it all women?

A. No. There were boys and girls.

Q. And they lived right there at the school.

A. The boys, they ^{didn't} live in school, but the girls did ~~live~~.

Q. Were there any special things they learned that they wouldn't get in any other schools around?

A. No. I don't think so. ~~The~~ the oldest one, we wanted her to go to college when she got through, but she didn't want to. She got married a year after. She wanted to be a mother, I guess. They learned to type and they had shorthand and everything.

Q. Were there a lot of things happening there at the convent? *A. No, the didn't*
~~Parties~~ and things like that.
plays

A. Oh, yes. They had a carnival and everything.

Q. How did they like living ^{with the nuns.} in the convent? Did they find it very strict?

A. They didn't think so. They never complained.

Q. I think that is very interesting because there are not too many people who get to go to a convent and stay.

A. Yes, well we thought the six months was, but...

Q. Did they learn French in there?

A. Yes, they both talked good French. Their father could talk French.

Q. They learned it from you?

A. They learned it from me. All the kids in school in St. Agatha were French and sometimes they didn't want to talk French. But, they did off and on. *them*

Q. Do they speak any French with their children? Do you know?

Q. That's too bad.
A. No. *At* The oldest one, she really learned good French. The other one, she wasn't as good as her sister, but after she was a nurse she had to learn French, too. So, she took French.

Q. Did anyone in your family work in the mills?

A. Oh, yes. My brother, Gilman, he is still working in the mill in East Millinocket.

Q. Did anyone in your family, when you were back in Guerrette, work in the woods? Did anyone cut pulp or anything like that?

A. I don't think so. ^{Just their own wood, that's all.} My father used to cut logs in the winter. He used to like it.

Q. What was New Years like when you were young?

A. Oh, gee. They would go from one house to another and they would ~~seem~~ seem to get drunk. They would get up first thing in the morning and go ~~eat breakfast there~~ ^{eat breakfast there} from where they were. My second father, his mother and father were living then. They didn't live too far from us. They would go there ~~first for practice~~ ^{first for breakfast} and then keep on going. They would come back and my father would be feeling pretty good.

Q. Just travel from one place to another and pick people up along the way. They used to go by sled?

A. Yes, that's right.

Q. What was Christmas like?

A. Christmas, we didn't have things like we have these days. We didn't have any ~~electric lights~~ ^{electric lights} and all that. It was just about the same beside that as it is now. We'd go to church.

Q. Did you go to midnight mass?

A. No, I don't remember when I was young that I ever went because we had to go to Daigle. ^{Q. So you'd do it on Christmas day. A. But I know Easter} ~~we'd all go there.~~ ^{Ed.}

Q. Did you ever have a ~~revillous~~ ^{revillous} réveillon on Christmas Eve?

A. Yes, We used to. We used to have rabbit stew. Then we would have the Christmas dinner. ~~we had~~ ^{we had} old people, they liked that. ~~years ago.~~ ^(Laughter)

Q. At ~~revillous~~ ^{revillous} réveillon, when you would have your rabbit stew, would people sing and tell stories?

A. Yes, it was like that. I can remember it was real fun.

Q. Do you remember any stories they used to tell that really stick out in your mind?

A. They used to sing. I remember the family used to sing hymns and Christmas songs. We used to have an organ at home and we used to play the organ.

Q. Did anyone ever play any other instruments other than an organ?

A. No. We all played. Not by note. I played, too. We would play and sing.

Q. But, you used to play by ear?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you used to sing in church, also?

A. Yes. My brother and I.

Q. Did you ever have ~~mardi-gra~~ *mardi Gras*?

A. Yes, that was fun, too. We all dressed and had masks and everything.

Q. This was Shrove ~~???~~ tuesday. *The* tuesday before ~~Ash~~ *Wednesday*?

A. Yes. It was more fun than they have now. Now ~~they~~ *it's halloween*.
~~??~~ ~~mardi-gra~~ *mardi Gras*.

In those days it was
Q. And you would put on masks and things like that? What would you do?

A. We would go from one house to another and sometimes we got something, sometimes we didn't. I know one time I had a mask made of deer skin and I had those big horns on top of my head. ~~????????~~ *Every body was* scared to death of me. I remember that.

Q. What was lent like?

A. Oh, lent. My mother made us pray so much it wasn't funny. We were glad when lent was over.

Q. Oh, you prayed all the time?

A. No, not all the time, but, she started off at night and it lasted for about an hour.

Q. Did you used to give anything up for lent?

A. Oh, yes. I still do.

Q. What types of things would you give up?

A. I, we used to give up candy, because we used to have a store. Candy, gum. We didn't have to give up saying prayers, because my mother would make us ~~prayers~~ *stay up* until we ~~until~~ *we* said all the prayers, again. ~~I haven't eaten any candy since I was a little girl. I still do.~~ *I've been giving up*

Q. You had enough ^V prayers to last a lifetime. Did you have a mid-lent celebration?

A. No, not too much. We didn't have a party. We had to go right through it. My mother was strict. She was a good Christian.

Q. Did you used to go to benediction often during lent? *And Stations of the Cross*

A. Well, we used to go to Daigle which was quite a ways. I can remember ~~for that~~ ^{Holy} week we used to go quite a few times.

Q. What was Easter like?

A. Easter, well we had ham. My father used to kill his pig. We'd have ham and eggs.

Q. Did you used to get candy on Easter?

A. Oh, yes. We'd go into the store and help ourselves on Easter.

Q. Did they talk about the Easter bunny or anything like that on Easter?

A. Not ~~too~~ much. It wasn't like it is now. These days all the children have an Easter bunny, but, in those days we didn't.

Q. If they gave you candy what would they say?

A. Well, we used to have candy so much a week and we would still have the same amount of candy. We used to put it away during lent. We had all the candy we had accumulated.

Q. You'd keep taking it, but, you wouldn't eat it. Then you would have it on Easter. What about ~~let die????~~ Did you used to have processions and things like that?

*A. A fat lot die? Q. Right.
la Fete-Dieu*

A. No. They probably did in Daigle, but, I don't remember too much about that.

Q. Fourth of July?

A. On the fourth of July, I can remember years ago, my uncle, he had a big family, he lived four miles from our place. He used to dance every night. I don't remember, ^{never went there} but, my mother used to tell me we used to celebrate fourth of July every year with my uncle for three days.

Q. Oh, really. They use to celebrate for three days?

A. I don't remember what they did.

Q. What about Thanksgiving? Did you used to celebrate Thanksgiving?

A. Yes. We used to have turkey, or if we didn't have turkey we would

have a big chicken.

Q. Pretty much what it is like now?

A. Well, not just as much as we do now, but, I can remember we did have a chicken.

Q. Did you used to go to mass on Thanksgiving day?

A. No, I don't think so. I don't remember. I don't think so.

Q. What about maple sugar time?

A. Oh, gee. That was fun. We used to go to the camp where they made maple sugar.

Q. Le cabine??? le sucre??? *La Cabana Sucre?*

A. Yes, that's right. We used to go there early in the morning because it froze. When we came back we had a couple pair of snow shoes. We had to walk 2 or 3 on a pair of snowshoes to get home. When we got home we used to be wet way up to here.

Q. Would you buy syrup, sugar, and taffy when you were there?

A. Yes. We'd get all the candy we wanted and we bought the maple sugar. We used to bring some for our ~~family~~ *USR.*

Q. And when would you use the sugar? Would you save it for just special times or special things?

*+ the
'90s
map*
A. My mother used to make some flap jacks and she would take the sugar and spread it on top and then she would put on another one. We used to love that. I still do that, because I go buy sugar now ~~used to buy sugar~~. My children like it, too. So, I have to go buy sugar and send it to them so they can make flap jacks. They shave the sugar and put another one on top to melt it, the bottom one. It is really delicious.

Q. How would you shave the sugar?

A. With a knife.

Q. Oh, just with a regular knife. Did you have a maple sugar scraper or anything like that?

A. No, we didn't. We just shaved it with a knife. *A. It works really good. We're going to make some for Easter*

Q. It works just as well. *1/2* Were there any business besides your own that you particularly remember? *In Stockholm.*

A. Years ago they had the mill and all that. Yes, they had stores. Paul Cyr had a store and Mr. Westie??? had a store.

WESSALL

Q. Were they just general stores?

LEWIS ANDERSON

A. They were grocery stores and Mr. ~~Louis Sandstrom~~, he had a hardware store were ~~Fogartene's~~ *ROSEMAN'S* store is now. That wasn't really my time. I don't remember too much.

Q. What kind of entertainment did you have when you were young?

A. On Saturday nights and Sundays nights we used to have parties at one house or another. Kissing games and we would dance.

Q. Oh, really. What kind of dances did you do?

It wasn't what they do now. well,
A. We used to waltz, we used to fox trot, I think they called it. Boston dancing and lady of the lake.

Q. Oh, you used to do lady of the lake?

A. Oh, yes. That was fun.

Q. That is an old Acadian dance. Did you used to jig? Did anyone used to jig?

A. Yes. Oh, yes. They used to do it. A lot of them.

Q. Did anyone ever do any quadrilles?

A. I don't know what that is.

Q. It is kind of a line dance. People would kind of walk it. It is kind of like a square dance, but, not really. Because there were circles and lines.

venture?
A. Something like Boston ~~venture~~ and lady of the lake?

Idea
Q. Something along that ~~avenue~~, I guess. Did you used to have any fiddle players at your dances? Anyone zing-zing???

Violin they called it.
A. Yes. With the fiddle. ~~????????????????????~~ Oh, yes ~~????????~~ *somebody was playing*
violin, accordian.

Q. What would they do? French tunes mostly?

we used to dance in the living room.
A. Oh, yes. ~~????????????????????~~ I don't remember exactly what they were playing.

Q. They probably never mentioned the names of the tunes. Do you remember if they had French names?

A. When you are young you just dance. You don't care ~~if~~ *what kind of tune it is.*
~~????????????????????~~

A. Yes. That is what it was. Young people.

Jeune naise?

Journalise

were so tired at night

Q. Did you ever used to sing as a family?

knitting

we never learned to knit.

A. Yes, we used to sing mostly French songs?
~~????????????????????????????????Dominos~~ I can't remember much now, that's a long time ago.

A. No, we didn't sing those Canadian songs.

A. Well, at Christmas time we would sing Christmas ~~????????~~ and things like that. I knew a lot of songs when I was young, but, I can't remember any really.

A. Yes. We used to sing that.

A. There was quite a few, but, I can't remember exactly.

A. Yes.

[illegible][illegible]

Q. You used to sing a lot of the American songs, too, then.

A. Oh, yes. We used to sing a lot of the English, too. After we got older. ~~????????????????~~. *And birthdays we'd sing different.*

Q. And of course you sing what you hear, too. If there are people around singing ^{English} ~~those~~ songs, then you learn those songs. Did anyone in your house play any instrument other than the organ?

A. No.

Q. Everyone just played the organ. Did you ever hear anyone sing le complaint ~~????~~ *or* ^e

A. Yes. They had one for my father. My first father. I never learned it. I just heard it.

Q. Do you remember what it was about?

A. Yes, it was about how he got killed and everything.

Q. How did he get killed?

A. He was coming from across the line, we had the store, and they were getting stuff like a great big barrel of molasses and stuff like that. And he saw the lightning. *And he was smuggling* I know he was smoking. I don't know how. And ~~we~~ ^{he} saw the light come and he ~~??????????~~ boxes and ~~??????????~~ faster and he fell in front of the wagon under their feet. *He wanted his horses to go*

Q. Oh, really. And they wrote a complaint about that?

thought it was the officers.

A. Yes.

Q. And people sang the song about how your father died?

A. Yes. I don't know if my sister knows it or not. My uncle used to sing it to us and my uncle died a couple years ago and I never learned the complaint. But, I heard it a couple of times. He would sing it to us.

Q. That is something, really something. Has anyone in your family ever done a genealogy? Wrote down your family history?

A. My mother did. She went to high school. I don't know if she graduated from high school, but, she went to high school.

Q. I mean, did anyone in your family ever ~~write~~ right down who your grandparents were and all that?

A. No, no. But, I had a girlfriend who did. In Guerrette.

Q. She did it of your family?

Handwritten signature: Mrs. Desner

A. Her family and our family, too, and all that.
guess.

The whole history
~~???????????????~~, I

Q. And did she ever tell you where your ancestors were from?

A. She never told us. I have never seen it, but, she told me she was writing it.

Q. Did your parents ever tell you where your roots are? *Where your ancestors*
were born, from Quebec or Acadia?

A. No.

Q. But, you knew you were from France, originally. Your family.

A. Yes.

Q. Did they ever tell you that?

A. No.

Q. You probably knew because of your language.

A. I think they were all American. I don't think there were any of them who were Canadian except for maybe way back. I don't know.

Q. Do you have any relatives in Canada?

A. No.

Q. Where are most of your relatives now?

A. Some are in Guerrette. I have some everywhere. In Portland, Connecticut.

Q. Do you have many relatives in the St. John Valley?

A. I have some.

Agatha?

Q. Mostly where? Frenchville, St. Agape?

Agatha

A. I have some in Madawaska. I don't have any in St. Agape. I have some in Guerrette and that is about all.

Q. The cemeteries where your ancestors are, are they mostly in Guerrette?

A. Yes. They just had the cemetery after they built the church. Before we had to go to Daigle.

Q. Was your mother an old-fashioned cook?

A. Some, yes.

Q. And were you an old-fashioned cook? You say you used to do a lot of the cooking.

A. Yes, I was at first. But, I learned it for nothing. After I got older everything was different. People like salads and things like that, but, years ago people didn't know much about kinds of salads and things.

Q. What did you used to eat back when you were little when you first started to cook. What kind of things did you cook?

A. I used to make chocolate pudding. I remember they used to like that. I remember I used to make bread. I learned to make bread from my mother. ~~????????????????????~~

And peas, and, you know.

Q. Did you ever used to make ploi~~??~~?

Oui
A. ~~Oui~~, I made a lot of ploi. I certainly did.

Q. How did you make ploi~~??~~?

A. Well, we used to have buttermilk most of the time. I used to make some with buttermilk. Then when we didn't have buttermilk in the winter we had a little wooden barrel where we used to keep some left over in there to get sour.

Q. So it would be ploi levan???. And you used to use buttermilk, too.

A. In the summer we had cows and we used to have buttermilk ~~all~~ the time.

Q. When you used the buttermilk what did the ploi~~???~~ look like. I have never seen one made with buttermilk.

A. They were a lot better. Right now I don't remember. I make the other one. But, I used to make buttermilk pancakes.. My husband used to like them. Just buttermilk and soda.

Q. Did they raise high?

A. Not too high.

Q. Okay, so they were pretty thin, then?

A. Yes. Buckwheat flour, white flour.

Q. Was there more buckwheat flour than white?

A. About half and half. They were really good. I liked them better.

Q. How would you add your buttermilk to them? Did you just put

END
OF
SIDE 1

buttermilk to thin it down or did you put water in it too?

A. No, I just put buttermilk, the flour, soda and salt. That is all. They used to be good.

Q. I bet. And of course you had to grease the pan didn't you?

A. Yes. We had to put a little butter in it.

Q. What kind of pies did you make?

A. I used to make all kinds of pies. Butterscotch, people liked butterscotch pie, chocolate pie, strawberry pie when we had strawberries in the summer.

Q. Would it be a cooked strawberry pie or would it be a fresh strawberry pie?

A. Fresh strawberry.

Q. Just strawberries, cream and a pie crust, you mean? Would it be cooked?

A. Yes. And we used to make rhubarb pie. We'd add eggs. Now I don't eat too much pie because I don't want to gain too much.

Q. Did you ever make tarte ~~molasse~~????

me'lasse

A. Yes. I have a good recipe for that.

Q. What does it look like when it is finished? Is it a thick pie where the molasses stays?

A. I used to make it with just ^{boil} molasses and sugar and my children used to like it that way. Every time they came ^{from the convent} home for the weekend I would have to make a molasses pie. But, now I found a recipe that is really good. You put some eggs in it and some brown sugar. It is really good.

Q. Do you put any milk in it?

A. No. My daughters like the one I used to make ^{before} better.

Q. Now, the one you used to make, when you cut it did it used to run off the plate?

A. Sometimes it did.

That's the best one

Q. Did you ever used to make tarte au sucre?

A. That would be brown sugar pie?

Q. Yes.

A. Oh, yes. Butterscotch pie we called it.

Q. I see. But, did you ever make a sugar pie with just white sugar?

A. No. I never knew how to make it. Would that be cream pie?

Q. No. It is just like tarte au ^em~~o~~lasse???, but, it is with sugar instead of molasses.

A. No. I never tried it.

Q. It is very, very, very sweet. Did you ever make maple syrup pie or maple pie?

A. No. Whenever we had maple syrup, we ate it.

Q. I don't blame you.

A. We would eat it with pancakes and other things. ^{or hot rolls.} ?????????????

Q. What about torte tiere???? ^{tourteau or fourtiere} "means pie dish"
^{↑ means "oil cake"}

A. I didn't make too many of those, but, I could make them
???????????????????? Make the pork, the beef...

^{I got a good recipe for.}

Q. No vegetables, though?

A. No. No vegetables.

Q. That's when it is the best. Did you ever make ^{pot en pot}port au puff???? or
~~sete puff???~~ with the seven kinds of meat?

^{sept pot}
A. No. I never made that.

Q. Did you make a lot of stews?

A. Yes. Beef stew, chicken stew...

Q. And rabbit stew?

A. No. ^{not after I got married.} ?????????????????????

Q. What about ^{couteau}corttoun???

A. Yes. I made some just about a month ago. I bought some pork and it had to be quite fat. So, I went to the slaughter house and got a piece of pork and made my corttoun???. they were real good.

Q. Have you ever heard of making them with chicken?

A. No. I don't like them. I never made any, but, I ate some and didn't like it as well as just the pork.

Q. Did you ever make boudan????

(EJ.
blood sausage)

A. My mother did, but, I never did.

Q. Did you ever help your mother make it?

A. Yes, we helped her a lot.

Q. What did you have to do when she was making the boudan????

A. We had to clean the casing. We had to clean that good, wash it, soak that in salt. My mother used to mix the blood with milk and I don't know just exactly. She used to put spices and all that. Then we would pull the threads in the casing and she used to put the blood through it.

Q. Would she have to cook the blood in milk?

A. No, no. She didn't. She had to put some fat with it, too. A little piece of fat with the milk.

Q. Then you used to just pour it in the casing?

A. Then she would boil it. She had a big black chaudron. She would boil it then we would just have to fry it up???

Q. Did you have to blow up the casing?

A. Oh, yes. That was fun.

Q. You had to blow it up like a balloon?

A. Yes. You would have to try it first to see if there was a hole in it. After you blew on it and there were no holes then they were okay. You could just fill it. We used to help with that. We used to love that.

Q. So, you used to fill just a little bit then tie it then fill a little more and then tie it?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, the stuff you used to put in it, was it curdled or something like that?

A. No. It wasn't curdled or anything. Because she put the salt and the blood before it curdled and then she put the milk and the spice. That's all she put.

Q. And then when she put it in the casing it would be liquid?

A. Yes. It would be just like pure blood I would say.

A. And then what would happen when it was in the casing? Whenever I have seen it, it has always been meaty. *Not meaty, but I mean...*

Q. The casing was full, not too full because it needed room. Then she would put it that big kettle of boiling water. She would boil it for maybe 10 or 15 minutes. I don't know how long.

Q. And that would make it solid?

A. Yes, that would make it solid then. Then we would fry it. It was delicious, too. Now you don't find any good ones. It's all like pudding. They don't make it good like we used to.

Q. Were there any special menu's on holidays? You mentioned the rabbit stew on ~~ravio~~ *réveillon*

A. *No* Yes, we didn't have it too often, but, we ~~didn't~~ *did* ~~it~~ *at Christmas Eve...* ~~our mother...~~ *to eat*

Q. Like on holidays, would you have any special that you wouldn't have any other time?

A. Yes, we did every Sunday. We had something different like stuffed chicken. We had something different like ham or...

Q. Did you have a *bûche de Noël* *(Yule Log)* ~~bush~~ ~~puel~~ like a Christmas cake or anything like that?

A. Yes. We used to make a cake. My mother used to make us make a cake. Then we had to celebrate. Put candles on it and then we would sing happy birthday to Jesus. A Christmas cake.

Q. Oh, really. That's nice. Did other people do that?

A. I don't know what everybody else did. But, we always did. The youngest kids always liked that, too. So, we would all sit down and sing happy birthday to Jesus.

Q. That's nice. Were there any special times of the year when there were special things in season that you ate? Like fiddle heads and things?

A. Yes. Fiddleheads, dandelions.

Q. What about *poulet* ~~grass~~ ~~grass~~ Did you ever used to pick *poulet* ~~grass~~ and put that in soups?

A. I never did. Maybe my mother did years ago. I don't remember. I never knew what it was. ~~grass~~

Q. Did you people have a garden?

A. Yes, we had a big garden.

Q. And you used to store up your things for winter?

A. Yes. String beans, corn, and all that stuff.

Q. Did you have a root cellar or did you just keep it in the cellar?

A. We had a big cellar. ~~275-7777-7777~~.

Q. Was French spoken in your home?

A. Yes. All the time. That's why we have such a French accent.

Q. Did you people speak English, also, in your home?

A. Not too much.

Q. Not too much, but you knew how to speak English?

A. Well, we just learned the best we could.

Q. You learned it when you were in school?

A. Yes.

Q. When you were in school, did you speak mostly English in school?

A. No, we didn't. Years ago I remember it was all French. That's why we didn't have much of a chance to learn good English because there was so much French when we were younger. You could pick it up *when you* a lot better ~~when you were~~ *Young* better. I didn't want my children to learn French at all right away. I didn't want them to have a French accent like I have. So, we started in English, but, after they talked with english, we taught them French.

Q. I see. Is your French different from the French in Fort Kent and Van Buren?

A. It's about the same. It is different from Canada, but, ~~????????????????????~~ French.

you talk about a post
Q. If you heard a person from Van Buren Speak, could you tell they were from Van Buren?

A. No.

Q. Did your mother speak a different French from your father?

A. What do you mean by a different French?

Q. Were some of the words that your father used different from your mother's French?

A. No, I don't think so. They were just about the same.

Q. Now, when you came to Stockholm, did you speak French here?

A. Not too much, but, my husband can speak French a lot. That's why I picked up my English I ~~????????????????????~~.
most have picked it up after I was married.

Q. I see. So, you were keeping care of the business. You could speak French and English. Could you speak any Swedish?

A. No.

Q. Did you learn any Swedish words at all?

A. No. Not at all. I couldn't even laugh in Swedish.

Q. Were your friends mostly French people or English people?

A. They were both. I am just as friendly with the English people as the French.

Q. Because your husband was English?

A. I guess.

Q. What was it like being French in a town where there were a lot of Swedish?

A. I didn't find it real different. It was a little different for me since I didn't have as good English as they had. But, I know I had to get by.

Q. And when you would talk to a Swedish person you would speak in English?

A. Oh, yes. All the Swede people talk English. I don't think there are any of them in this town. Maybe some old, old ones *that still can't talk English.*

Q. The Swedish people have some wonderful customs and things like that. Did you experience many of those things?

A. No, not too much.

Q. They did most of that with themselves, then?

A. ???????????? I thought...

Q. They would sing their Swedish songs and do their Swedish dances when they were together by themselves.

A. No, people were all mixed up.

Q. Did you ever see them do the Swedish dances and sing Swedish songs?

A. Oh, yes. The Swedish hop.

Q. What did you think of it?

A. I thought it was kind of cute. My daughter learned the Swedish hop. She did good.

Q. Did you find the Swedish dances very different from the dances you learned when you were a child?

A. Well, they were quite a bit different. I didn't go to very many dances once I got to Stockholm. My husband wasn't a dancer. He wasn't much for these parties, so, *Yes. I didn't really go to any parties.*

Q. But, did you find there dancing really a lot different?

A. No, it wasn't much different. We didn't have the Swedish hop. We didn't have that, but, besides that it was just about the same. We used to go to school and they had dances at school. We used to take the girls and stay there and they had just about the same dances.

Q. Did you feel that Stockholm was your town?

A. No, I never liked it.

Q. Oh, you never did?

A. No. But, I'm stuck with it now. *my home is here. otherwise I wouldn't stay here now.*

Q. Why didn't you especially care for Stockholm?

A. I don't know. I didn't think it was as friendly as it is. *There.*

Q. Probably you didn't know as many people here as you did back in Guerrette.

A. Yes, I know. I knew a lot of people in Guerrette.

Q. What does being French mean to you?

A. Well, *I'm better in French but still I'd rather have better*
~~I've got friend~~ *English!*

Q. Did you find it an advantage or a disadvantage?

A. No. It's okay. I'm satisfied with it the way it is.

Q. That's good. Did you find that it helped you a lot to know French or it didn't.

A. These days everything is English. A lot of the French people can't even talk French.

Q. Did you ever hear any talk about Quebec when you were a child?

A. Not too much.

Q. Were there any priests or nuns in your family?

A. Not in my family, but, I have *3 or 4* cousins who are sisters *????*.

Q. Where are they living?

A. I don't know exactly. I know one is in Biddeford. *One is in Saco*
~~????????????????????~~ And two other ones are up around Waterville somewhere. I don't know exactly where they are right now. And another one was in Lewiston, but, she died last year.

Q. How did they go into the convent? Were they from Fort Kent or

something?

A. One went to Montrael ~~????????????????~~ and the other one went to Biddeford, I think. ~~????~~ three of them.

Q. They just decided they wanted to go into a convent and chose an order?

A. Yes, I guess so. ~~????????????????~~

Q. What games did you play when you were a child?

A. We used to play ~~charlamigne~~³¹. That's with cards. Then we used to play all kinds of games when we were young. We used to go to parties a bunch of boys and girls and we would pick ~~????????????????~~. I don't know. I don't remember. *that's all I remember.* *play kissing games.*

Q. Did you used to play borro????

A. We used to play ~~????~~ and, gee, I don't know. We used to play post office. I don't think I remember too much of those games we played.

Q. Did you ever used to play borro???? *borro?*

A. No. I don't remember that. We used to spin the bottle. *Post office.*

Q. What kind of toys did you have? Were they toys that your father made?

A. No. Something that they bought for Christmas. We didn't have too many toys. But, we had some at Christmas time. We had dolls, the girls.

Q. Was the kitchen the most used room in your house?

A. Yes, it was. We had a great big kitchen.

Q. What was it used for just about everything?

A. Yes.

Q. When company came would they sit in the kitchen rather than go in the parlor?

A. I don't know if we had a parlor. At first we didn't, but, after we built our new house we had a parlor, then. *we had a living room.*

Q. But, when company came would they stay in the kitchen?

A. It would depend on what kind of company they were. When they were close company, when they came often, well we sat in the kitchen. If we had company from outside we would sit in the ~~other~~ room.

living

Q. Did your father or your brothers used to hunt or fish very much?

A. Not hunt, but, they'd fish?

Q. So, you used to have a lot of venison and that type of thing?

A. No. We didn't have any venison. ^{nobody went hunting.} My father used to go, but, not too often. But, after my brother got old enough he used to go fishing.

Q. Did he catch a lot of fish, then?

A. Yes.

Q. Trout, salmon, and smelt.

A. Trout and salmon. That's about all.

Q. Were there any other things you used to do for recreation?

A. Not too much. We didn't have too much.

Q. No baseball or anything like that?

A. No.

Q. Did you play tag and things like that?

A. Yes, we played tag and we played ball, too. It wasn't like we had a ball team or anything like that, though. And run the house, I guess. ~~I don't remember exactly what we played, but, we used to play it a lot, anyway.~~ I remember I used to like to play ball. I don't remember exactly what we played, but, we used to play it a lot, anyway.

Q. That's all I have. Would you like to add anything to that?

A. No, I guess not. ~~????????????????~~ i talked enough

Q. Your husband, where was he from?

A. Van Buren. He was born in Van Buren then they lived in Stockholm all their life. He was just about a year old when they moved to Stockholm.

Q. Did he have very many brothers and sisters?

A. Yes. My sister married one of his brothers. My sister married the oldest one, Albert.

Q. Now, isn't that something. Your daughters are married to brothers and you have a sister who is married to one of his brothers.

A. Yes. She lives in Portland and he died, too.

Q. Now his family name, is that an English name?

A. Gessner?

Q. Yes.

A. I don't know. *The priest said* He said it was German one time. I said, *during the war,*
~~??~~
if he was German I wasn't going to live with him. (Laugh)

Q. And he was born in Van Buren. How did he happen to be born in Van Buren?

A. I don't know how they happened to live there. Mr. Gessner always worked on the railroad. Then they moved to Stockholm and bought a house. There were four boys. There is Albert, Howard, Vaughan, Anson. Howard was the youngest one. The youngest one was Anson.

Q. Do you know his father's name?

A. Edward.

Q. And his mother's name?

A. I can't even remember her name. It was always Mrs. Gessner. I never called her mother. She was Canadian.

End